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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ADDIS ABABA 001234

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DEPARTMENT FOR AF AND AF/E  
LONDON, PARIS, ROME FOR AFRICA WATCHER  
CJTF-HOA FOR POLAD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/20/2017

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SUBJECT: SOMALIA: TFG PRESIDENT YUSUF HIGHLIGHTS ROLE OF  
REGIONAL STATES

Classified By: ERIC WONG, DEPUTY POL-ECON COUNSELOR. REASON: 1.4 (D).

11. (C) SUMMARY. In an April 20 meeting with Ambassador, visiting Transitional Federal Government of Somalia (TFG) President Abdullahi Yusuf said the security situation in Somalia was improving, but that Council of Islamic Court (CIC) remnants in Mogadishu continued to provoke the TFG. While the TFG had been forced to "fight back," Yusuf affirmed the TFG's commitment to holding national reconciliation talks, and said the TFG and Ethiopia continued negotiations with Somali political, religious, and civil society leaders. Referring to Ethiopian FM Seyoum's upcoming trip to Washington, Yusuf said FM Seyoum represented TFG as well as Ethiopian interests, and appealed for the USG to help Ethiopia defray the costs of military expenditures on behalf of the TFG in Somalia. Highlighting Eritrea's destabilizing role, Yusuf said CIC fighters had used Iranian anti-aircraft weapons from Eritrea to shoot down AMISOM and other aircraft, and noted that released CIC "moderates" had joined other hard-liners in Asmara. Yusuf complained of support from Qatar and Egypt for opponents to the TFG, and said Italy was responsible for blocking EU support for Somalia. As instructed by Embassy Nairobi, Ambassador delivered three points on outreach to other clans, avoiding war in Mogadishu, and support of humanitarian aid flows. Yusuf replied the TFG was "doing what we promised," referring to pledges made to AF A/S Frazer during her visit to Baidoa. END SUMMARY.

12. (U) Ambassador, accompanied by PAO and deputy pol-econ counselor (note-taker), met April 20 with visiting TFG President Abdullahi Yusuf and his Chief of Staff Abdirizak Adam Hassan. PAO contact Ahmed Ibrahim, an Addis Ababa-based Somali (Dir/Isaaq) businessman with close contacts to Yusuf, accompanied President Yusuf.

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INTER-SOMALI NEGOTIATIONS CONTINUE... AS DOES FIGHTING  
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13. (C) President Yusuf said the security situation in Somalia was improving, but that CIC remnants in Mogadishu continued to provoke the TFG, citing an April 19 mortar attack that had killed one individual at the presidential villa. To avoid civilian casualties, the TFG had sought to separate these CIC fighters from the general population, but had been forced to "fight back" following attacks on the TFG's civilian and

military headquarters. Pledging that "these terrorists will be liquidated from the capital," Yusuf asserted that removing the CIC from Mogadishu would pacify Somalia. Some 4-5 Somali CIC leaders were part of Al-Qaida, Yusuf said, highlighting al-Itihaad al-Islamiya (AIAI) leader Hassan Abdullah Hersi al-Turki and Adan Hashi Ayro, who he said was "assassinating intellectuals" in Somalia. Recent international media reports critical of U.S. and Ethiopian support only encouraged these terrorists, he said. Asked about TFG Ambassador Farah's April 11 public statement that 200 additional foreign fighters had been captured in Somalia, Yusuf said all captured foreigners had already been turned over to Ethiopia; if more were captured in the future, they too would be transferred to Ethiopia.

14. (C) While such "troublemakers" sought to derail negotiations, joint TFG-Ethiopian talks with Somali political, religious, and civil society leaders continued. Yusuf denied that the TFG opposed specific clans or sub-clans, such as the Hawiye or Hawiye/Habr-Gedir/Ayr. Asked whether these talks were conducted by the GOE or the TFG, Yusuf replied, "We are together, of course; we are allies."

15. (C) President Yusuf noted that USG pressure had led to the release of CIC Executive Committee Chairman Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed and his travel to Yemen. However, following complaints from human rights groups that Sharif and others were being "held in captivity," Yemen had been compelled to allow Sharif to depart. While the USG had considered Sharif a moderate, Yusuf said, Sharif was now in Asmara, as was CIC foreign secretary Ibrahim Addow, an Amcit whose cousin was a former Somali ambassador to the U.S. Hassan noted that "so-called moderates" were actually more hard-line than

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others.

16. (C) As instructed by Embassy Nairobi, Ambassador delivered three points on outreach to other clans, avoiding war in Mogadishu, and support of humanitarian aid flows. Ambassador underscored the need for the TFG to promote reconciliation and outreach to all clans, eliminate fighting, and facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance, noting that he was reiterating points addressed in recent correspondence from Embassy Nairobi to President Yusuf. While some activities required long-term focus, the international community had expectations of quick progress. Yusuf replied that lack of security in Mogadishu, the talks' anticipated venue, had required a two-month postponement, but affirmed that national reconciliation talks would occur. Yusuf added that the TFG was "doing what we promised," referring to pledges made to AF A/S Frazer during her visit to Baidoa.

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TRAIN AND EQUIP TFG FORCES, AND SUPPORT ETHIOPIA  
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17. (C) Referring to Ethiopian FM Seyoum's upcoming April 23 trip to Washington, President Yusuf said "when he goes to Washington, you can consider that he represents Somalia too." Yusuf appealed for the USG to help Ethiopia defray the costs of military expenditures on behalf of the TFG in Somalia. As both Somalia and the United States were fighting terrorism, the TFG ultimately sought USG assistance to train and equip Somali security forces, so Somalia could have its own capacity. In the meantime, however, it was essential to support Ethiopia and the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM): U.S. military and logistical support for Ethiopia "will be good for us," Yusuf said.

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IRANIAN WEAPONS, VIA ERITREA, USED AGAINST TFG AND AMISOM  
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18. (C) Addressing the role of other regional actors,

President Yusuf said the TFG had evidence (correspondence between CIC Shura Chairman Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys and Iran) that Iranian-origin anti-aircraft weaponry, delivered via Eritrea, had been used by anti-TFG forces in Somalia to shoot down a helicopter as well as a Belarussian AMISOM cargo plane. Used by Iran and other Arab countries (particularly Egypt) as a proxy, Eritrea was providing training for terrorists and "actively meddling" in Somalia, Yusuf said. Eritrea had also shown "some cooperation with Somaliland" in delivering arms and supplies to anti-TFG forces, which otherwise would have been cut off. Like Qatar, Asmara hosted numerous dissidents who sought to destabilize Somalia. President Isaias was destabilizing the entire region, Yusuf said, citing Eritrean engagement with insurgents in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Darfur, eastern Sudan, and now Somalia.

¶9. (C) Hassan criticized Djiboutian President Guelleh for "vacillating" between supporting and opposing the TFG. President Yusuf noted that Guelleh had been "helpful" to the TFG until the CIC had taken over Mogadishu. At the January 2007 AU Summit in Addis Ababa, Guelleh had spoken out in support of Ethiopian intervention, but within the last 3-4 days, he had called for Ethiopian forces to leave Somalia. Yusuf agreed that Guelleh was likely swayed by commercial interests, reaping revenue from sources ranging from Somalia to Iran.

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ARAB STATES (AND ITALY) WORKING AGAINST TFG  
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¶10. (C) Hassan observed the irony of three pro-U.S. Arab states--Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt--opposing the TFG. Egypt and Saudi Arabia were combating terrorism domestically, but did not understand that the TFG was doing the same. Hassan appealed for the USG to protest to Egyptian authorities; as for Saudi Arabia, Saudi individuals, but not the government, supported the CIC. Yusuf noted that Qatar had not responded to the TFG's appeal not to host a meeting of anti-TFG dissidents, and was instead providing opponents

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of the TFG with cash and vehicles.

¶11. (C) Addressing recent reports that the European Commission was concerned about alleged war crimes committed by Ethiopian and TFG forces, Yusuf underscored that as the former colonial power in southern Somalia, Italy was leading EC opposition to assisting the TFG. Germany did not share Italy's views, and France was preoccupied with domestic elections. The TFG would send delegations to Brussels, Saudi Arabia, and throughout Africa, to garner support, Yusuf said, as terrorism was the enemy of every country. Stopping the fight against terrorism was "criminal," he concluded.

¶12. (C) COMMENT: President Yusuf's observation that USG assistance to the Ethiopian military will benefit the TFG, and his assessment of the destabilizing role of regional actors such as Eritrea and Djibouti, reflects the common security interests shared by Ethiopia and the TFG. While Ethiopia has actively engaged in consultations with Hawiye and Hawiye/Habr-Gedir/Ayr representatives, Yusuf avoided highlighting any clan or sub-clan in his remarks. The assertion that CIC elements in Mogadishu are receiving Iranian weaponry from Eritrea suggests that the portrayal of Somali instability as a primarily intra-clan conflict neglects the significant regional and strategic interests that contribute to make Mogadishu a flashpoint for continued violence. END COMMENT.  
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